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ABSTRACT

In recent years many colleges and universities have been offering various types of career classes to aid students with undecided majors choose their college major and future occupation. In an attempt to assess the effect of a short-term career class on undecided students, two groups of students enrolled in 1966 were assessed after 10 years. An experimental group (155 men, 70 women) of students who had taken the class was compared with a control group (155 men, 70 women) of students who had not taken the class. Data analyses indicated that a significantly higher percentage of students who had taken the class completed college during the 10 year period. Although no significant differences were found among the men, a significantly greater percentage of the women who took the class completed 4 years of college. No significant differences were found between the two groups in the number of changes of college major. Although the data indicate that enrollment in the career class did seem to have the greatest influence on undecided female students, the reasons for this effect are unknown. Follow-up studies might focus on evaluating the impact of recently developed, longer-term, credit career classes. (AG)

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A CAREER CLASS DOES HAVE AN IMPACT - A TEN YEAR FOLLOW-UP

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A CAREER CLASS DOES HAVE AN IMPACT - A TEN YEAR FOLLOW-UP

In recent years many colleges and universities have been offering various types of career classes to aid undecided major students in their efforts to make their college major and occupational choices. It has been demonstrated by several career class evaluation and research studies (Stone, 1948, Smith 1971, Smith and Evans, 1973, Goodson, 1969, Bratsch and Hackett, 1979) that students in some career classes do make gains toward their career choices when compared with students who do not take these classes.

The purpose of this study was to follow-up and compare over a ten year period, undecided major college students who took a short term career class with a random selection of undecided major students who did not take the class, to see if any differences existed in the number of students completing four years of college and the number of times they officially changed their major. According to Herr and Cramer (1974) the career education movement was spurred on to help reduce the number of school drop outs.

METHOD

A non-credit career orientation class which met one day a week for eight weeks was started on the Brigham Young University campus in the fall of 1966. This class was designed to familiarize undecided major students with the college majors offered by each of the twelve colleges on campus and the related occupational opportunities that could result from each major. Most of the colleges presented their department and major offerings at their scheduled time by a ten minute slide-tape presentation followed by a discussion period conducted by a college representative. Usually the college dean or a designated department chairman would personally come to the class to present and discuss their college offerings.

During each of the eight class periods every student received handouts which clearly presented the majors and minors offered by the various colleges along with the occupational opportunities directly related to the college majors. Students were also made aware of the various places on campus where they could go and obtain more information about the college majors for which they felt they had the most interest. During the Fall Semester of 1966, 226 undecided students (156 men and 70 women) enrolled in the 10 sections of the college orientation career class. The sections of the class averaged about 23 students per class.

In 1977, after a ten year period had passed - 1966 to 1976 - the Career Education Department, with the help of the University Institutional Research Division, conducted a follow-up study. With the use of the University 360 computer and the student information data bank, the undecided students who enrolled in the fall 1966 career classes were identified. A computer printout was obtained giving each students' semester enrollment over a ten year period, and the major he or she was officially enrolled in during each semester. A random selection of 225 (155 men and 70 women) undecided major students enrolled the fall of 1966 and who never, during the ten year follow-

up period, enrolled for the career class were also identified with a print-out of their semester enrollments and declared major for each semester. The control group had the same portion of men and women as the career class group so sex differences, if they existed, would not influence the findings. The fall 1966 mean grade point averages of both groups (career class - 2.44, control - 2.35) were found to be similar with no significant differences at the .05 level. Chi-square comparisons were made to see if significant differences existed between the number of students in each group who completed four years of college, as well as the number of official college major changes. These comparisons were also made between the women in each group as well as between the men in each group.

RESULTS

After comparing the 226 undecided major students taking the career class in the fall of 1966 with a random sample of 225 undecided major students not taking the class, it was found that a higher percent of students taking the class (67%) completed four years of college over a ten year period, than those not taking the class (57%). This difference was significant at the .05 level. Comparisons between the groups are given in Table 1.

TABLE 1

No difference was found to exist between the men taking the class and those not taking the class. There were, however, differences at the .05 level between the percent of women completing four years of college who took the class (60%) and those women who did not take the class (43%).

Table 2 shows the chi-square comparison between the groups as to the number of times the career class students and control students changed their major officially over a ten year period. One major change was from undecided major to a major. Two or more changes indicates the number of times they changed their major after they first declared their major officially.

TABLE 2

Undecided major students not taking the class had a higher percent of two or more changes than the career class students, however these differences were not significant at the .05 level.

CONCLUSIONS

According to this study, a higher percent of undecided major students who took an eight week, one day a week, non-credit career class completed four years of college over a ten year period than undecided major students who did not take the class. The class was designed to help students become familiar with all of the college majors offered on the Brigham Young University campus and related occupations. Significant differences existed between the groups by chi-square comparison at the .05 level.

Even though more men taking the class completed four years of college than those not taking the class these differences were not significant. Differences were significant at the .05 level between the women taking the class and those not taking the class. A higher percent taking the class (60%) completed four years of college than those not taking the class (43%).

No significant differences were found to exist in the number of two or more college major changes over a ten year period between those taking the class and those not taking the class.

An eignt week, one day a week, non-credit career class offered on the Brigham Young University campus the fall of 1966 did seem to have some influence in the number and percent of students completing four years of college over a ten year period. The greatest influence however was with the women undecided major students. How the class helped is unknown. It was designed to help students establish their college major and occupational objectives. Possibly more students, especially women, establish these objectives because of the class and thereby completed four years of college.

IMPLICATIONS

Since a short term non-credit career class seemed to have an influence on undecided major college students completing four years of college, more follow-up studies need to be made to evaluate the impact of more recently developed longer term credit career classes to see what effect they have on the lives of college students.

If career classes prove to be effective in aiding college students to make and implement their career plans, and stay in school, it seems that colleges who now do not offer these classes should consider offering them for the benefit of their students especially their women students.

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Table 1

A chi-square comparison of the number of students in a career class and control group completing four years of college over a ten year period.

Group	No.	Completed Four Years	Dropped Out	X^2
Career Class	226	# 152	74	
		% 67	33	5.14*
No Career Class	225	# 128	97	
		% 57	43	
Men - Career Class	156	# 110	46	
		% 71	29	1.87
Men - Nc Career Class	155	# 98	57	
		% 63	37	
Women - Career Class	70	# 42	28	
		% 60	40	4.12*
Women - No Career Class	70	# 30	40	
		% 43	57	

*P <.05

Table 2

A chi-square comparison of the number of official college major changes of career class students and a control over a ten year period.

Group	No. Completing Four Years	One Major Change	Two or More Major Changes	X^2
Career Class	152	# 102	50	
		% 67	33	.27
No Career Class	128	# 82	46	
		% 64	36	
Men - Career Class	110	# 72	38	
		% 65	35	.24
Men - No Career Class	98	# 61	37	
		% 62	38	
Women - Career Class	42	# 30	12	
		% 71	29	.01
Women - No Career Class	30	# 21	9	
		% 70	30	

Note: (1) One major change was from undecided major to a declared major. Two or more changes meant they changed from their first declared major.

(2) No significant differences existed between the groups.